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Immigration to Manchester, New Hampshire History, Trends, and Implications

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Immigration is an important source of population growth and demographic diversity in the United States. Immigration introduces a more multicultural and multiracial population, as well as linguistic diversity and disparities in education and income. These changes have created social and economic vitality in some respects, but they also have created challenges and are sometimes met with anxiety and backlash. Immigration is a contentious topic in politics, and the U.S. Congress has debated but has not yet passed a comprehensive bill to reform immigration policy. Although much of the attention to immigration has focused on large metropolitan areas and border states such as Arizona and California, immigration has also affected smaller cities and rural areas.¹

Manchester, New Hampshire, has seen recent growth in immigration, and the new arrivals are a major source of increasing demographic diversity.² Yet immigration has been part of the Manchester history for more than a century. This brief analyzes immigration and refugee resettlement in Manchester and the effects on the city's demographic composition, as well as the implications for its future.

Historical Trends in Immigration to Manchester

Immigration has been an important part of American history as well as that of New Hampshire and Manchester. Figure 1 presents data on the foreign born population of the United States, New Hampshire, and Manchester from 1870 to 2010. These data are from the decennial census and rely on U.S. Census Bureau definitions. Generally speaking,

KEY FINDINGS

Manchester, New Hampshire, like the nation, is experiencing a new wave of immigration. In the past, most immigrants tended to come from Canada and Europe. Today, they are most likely from Latin America, followed by Asia and, to a lesser extent, Africa.

If it were not for immigration, the population of Manchester would have declined from 2000 to 2010; all of its growth (+2.4 percent) can be attributed to immigration.

The rate of refugee placement in Manchester has remained relatively steady since the 1990s. Of all refugees who arrived in Manchester since 1982, 7 percent arrived during the 1980s, 41 percent during the 1990s, and 40 percent between 2000 and 2010.

Manchester is more racially and ethnically diverse and younger than the rest of New Hampshire and immigration is a key contributing factor.

Immigration and diversity play important roles in economic growth. However, gaps in education and poverty and language barriers must be addressed if the city is to fully realize the benefits of this demographic change.

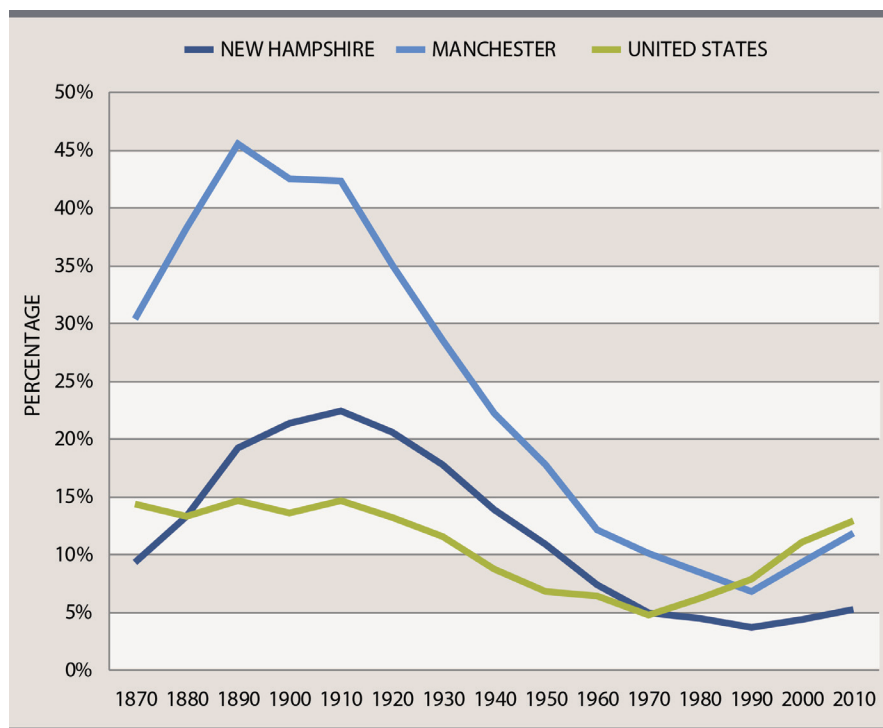
the term “foreign born” is synonymous with the term “immigrant,” so the data in Figure 1 can be interpreted as the proportion of the population who are immigrants for each of the census years shown. In 2010, approximately 12 percent or around 13,000 of Manchester residents were immigrants.

Terms and Data Sources

Immigrant and *foreign born* are used interchangeably in this brief. Both refer to those who were born outside of the country and moved to the United States. The U.S. Census uses the term *foreign-born population*, but political debate and popular discussion refer to *immigration*. We do not differentiate between immigrants who arrive with or without legal permission because we rely on U.S. Census data, and the census does not make this distinction. *Refugees* are a subset of the immigrant population and are defined as those who are admitted to the United States because of persecution in their homeland due to race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. The United States has been participating in worldwide refugee resettlement efforts since 1980, and refugees often live in a third country before coming to the United States. The number of refugees depends on conflicts in other parts of the world and on U.S. policy. (See Philip Martin and Elizabeth Midgley, “Immigration: Shaping and Reshaping America.” (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 2006.)

Immigrants were an important source of labor for Manchester’s industrial economy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and, until very recently, they constituted a much larger proportion of the population in Manchester than in the state or nation as a whole (Figure 1). In 1890, nearly one-half of

FIGURE 1. PERCENT FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION FOR UNITED STATES, NEW HAMPSHIRE, AND MANCHESTER



Source: U.S. Decennial Census 1870–2000; American Community Survey Estimate for 2010, 2007–2011

Manchester’s population was foreign born. That proportion declined because of changing economics, particularly the closing of Amoskeag Mills in 1935 and an increasingly restrictive national immigration policy. But the immigrant share of the Manchester population remained higher than that of New Hampshire, and the proportion of immigrants in the nation surpassed that of Manchester only in the mid-1980s. After waning for several decades, Manchester’s foreign-born population started to increase in 1990, in sync with the national trend. In fact, if it were not for immigration, the population of Manchester would have declined from 2000 to 2010; all of its growth (+2.4 percent) can be attributed to immigration.³ While such an increase might seem small,

population growth is important for economic expansion. The history of Manchester’s mills and the role immigrants played in the growth of this industry illustrate this point.

Shifts in the Origins of Manchester’s Immigrants

Immigrant origins have shifted in Manchester. The Amoskeag Manufacturing Company (also known as Amoskeag Mills) was the largest textile manufacturing company in the world at the turn of the twentieth century, and its demand for labor was intense. Originally, workers came from the farmlands of rural New England, but immigrant workers began to replace the “mill girls” in the 1850s and 1860s. Irish immigrants were followed by

Germans and Swedes, and in the 1870s Amoskeag Mills began to heavily recruit French Canadians.⁴ In 1890, the proportion of foreign-born residents in Manchester's population peaked, as illustrated in Figure 1. This peak was largely driven by the expansion of the Mills during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Immigration was, therefore, the source of labor for the mills and the source of Manchester's ethnic diversity in the ensuing decades.

The origins of recent immigrants to Manchester are very different from the origins of those who labored in Amoskeag Mills (Figure 2). Only 30 percent of recent immigrants come from regions that gave Manchester its mill workers (North America and Europe). Today's immigrants are more likely to come from Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

In addition, since 1980, Manchester—as well as other New Hampshire localities⁵—has been a resettlement site for international refugees, part of a program created by the Federal Refugee Act of 1980 that established resettlement sites in all states. According to data from the Office of Minority Health, between 1980 and 2012, almost 6,000 refugees resettled in Manchester. Directly estimating the current proportion of all immigrants in Manchester who are refugees is not possible. Although the data available refer to the number of refugees who arrive each year, some refugees move to other locations after initial resettlement, and these moves are not captured by data collection efforts.

The number of refugees arriving varies each year. To better capture

U.S. Policy on Refugees

The United States has been a home for refugees throughout its history. The current U.S. policy on refugees was created when Congress passed the Refugee Act of 1980. This Act placed responsibility for refugee resettlement jointly with the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM) in the Department of State and the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Department of Health and Human Services. The Act also tied the United States' definition of refugee to the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) definition, which allows the U.S. resettlement program to work in conjunction with programs in other countries.

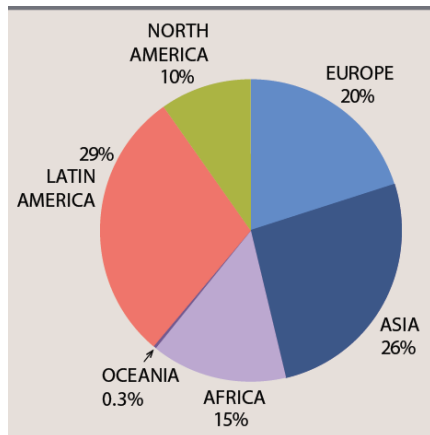
In 2011, a total of 61,231 UNHCR-designated refugees resettled in 22 resettlement countries. More than 70 percent of these refugees (43,215) resettled in the United States, and more than 90 percent (55,639) of the refugees who resettled in 2011 went to only three

countries: the United States, Canada, and Australia. The fact that these three countries are the leaders in refugee resettlement is most likely related to their long histories of significant and relatively open immigration.

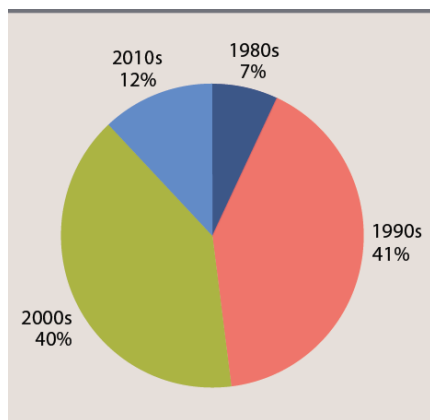
In the United States, the administering offices in the Department of State and the Department of Health and Human Services fund and oversee the Refugee Resettlement Program, which is carried out by nine nonprofit resettlement agencies or voluntary agencies. Oversight within the individual states in which refugees are resettling is carried out by state refugee coordinating agencies that manage federal grants to the voluntary agencies and other community-based organizations that provide the services and resources the refugees need. The goal of the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program is for the resettled refugees to "achieve self-sufficiency within eight months," with access to mainstream services an important indicator of self-sufficiency.

the pattern over time, we present the percentage of total refugees since the beginning of the program by decade (Figure 3). Since the 2010s do not yet include a full decade of data, the total contribution of this most recent decade remains to be seen. As Figure 3 suggests, the rate of resettlement has been fairly steady. About 40 percent of the current total arrived in both the 1990s and in the first decade of

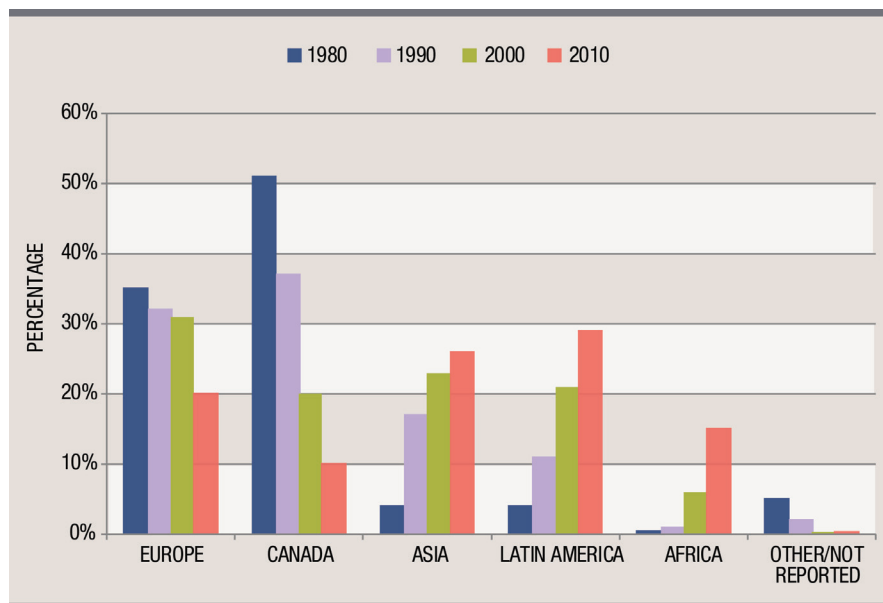
the 2000s. If the current pattern for the 2010s holds, the second decade of the 2000s will be about the same as the previous two. The average numbers of resettlements per year for the three most recent decades are, chronologically, 261, 252, and 257, respectively. Therefore, steady—but not increasing—numbers of refugees have been resettling in Manchester since resettlement began in the 1980s.

FIGURE 2. REGION OF ORIGIN OF MANCHESTER'S FOREIGN BORN POPULATION, 2010

Source: American Community Survey, 2007–2011 Estimate

FIGURE 3. REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN MANCHESTER: PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL BY DECADE OF ARRIVAL

Source: : NH Office of Minority Health

FIGURE 4. REGION OF ORIGIN FOR MANCHESTER'S FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION, 1980–2010

Source: U.S. Decennial Census 1980, 1990, and 2000; American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates (2007–2011)

However, the origins of immigrants and refugees have changed significantly. In part, this trend reflects longitudinal changes in the origins of immigration streams to the United States. Figure 4 shows origins of Manchester's immigrant population; Figure 5 shows similar data for the refugee population. In the past thirty years, fewer immigrants have come from Europe or Canada, and more have come from Asia, Africa, and, predominantly, Latin America. For the refugee subset of the immigrant population, there has been a shift away from European origin and an increase in refugees from Asia (the largest group to arrive in the 2010s to date, including a substantial number of Bhutanese), and from Africa, and the Middle East (including a number of refugees from Iraq). Similar to the nation and the rest of New Hampshire, Manchester's Latin American-born population has

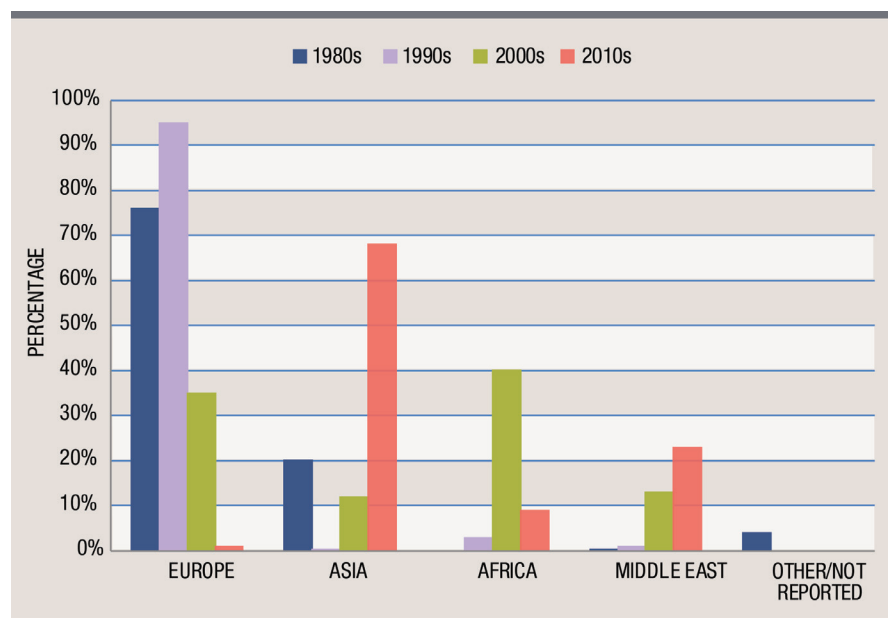
increased substantially, constituting the largest segment of the foreign-born population in the city in 2010 (29 percent). Yet, as indicated in Figure 5, no refugees have come from Latin America.

Immigration Contributes to Manchester's Diversity and Younger Population

There are important opportunities associated with the growth of the immigrant population. Manchester is more diverse and younger than the population in the rest of New Hampshire, largely as a result of immigration.

New Hampshire is a relatively homogeneous state, with a minority population of only 8 percent. Compared to the state, Manchester is considerably more racially and ethnically diverse but less so than

FIGURE 5. REGION OF ORIGIN OF MANCHESTER'S REFUGEE POPULATION, 1980–2010s



Source: U.S. Department of State

the nation as a whole. Overall, 18 percent of Manchester's population is Hispanic or non-white, while the national figure is 37 percent.⁶ In addition, the immigrant population in Manchester is more diverse than the native-born population. Among immigrants, 67 percent are of minority status, while among the native born, only 11 percent are minorities. Immigration is thus a driving force in the increasing diversity in Manchester, and this has implications for the age structure in the city.

Individuals tend to immigrate when they are younger, particularly when they are seeking better lives for themselves and their children or the economic security necessary to start a family. A younger age structure is a source of economic growth because it contributes to replenishing an otherwise aging labor force. A younger age structure, with more individuals of childbearing age, is also

a source of future natural increase in the population. The effect of immigration is clear in Manchester's comparatively younger population. In 1980, Manchester had a median age of 31 compared with 30 for the state as a whole. Based on the most recent census data, New Hampshire now has a median age of nearly 41 compared with 36 for Manchester.⁷

Figures 6 and 7 present very different age distributions for the non-Hispanic white and minority populations.⁸ Data on age distribution for the foreign-born population are not available, so we rely instead on minority status regardless of place of birth (that is, foreign or native born).

Figure 6 depicts a typical pattern for an aging (in this case non-Hispanic white) population: lower numbers at the bottom of the pyramid and a bulge in the middle to top. Figure 7, in contrast, shows the pattern for a more youthful (in

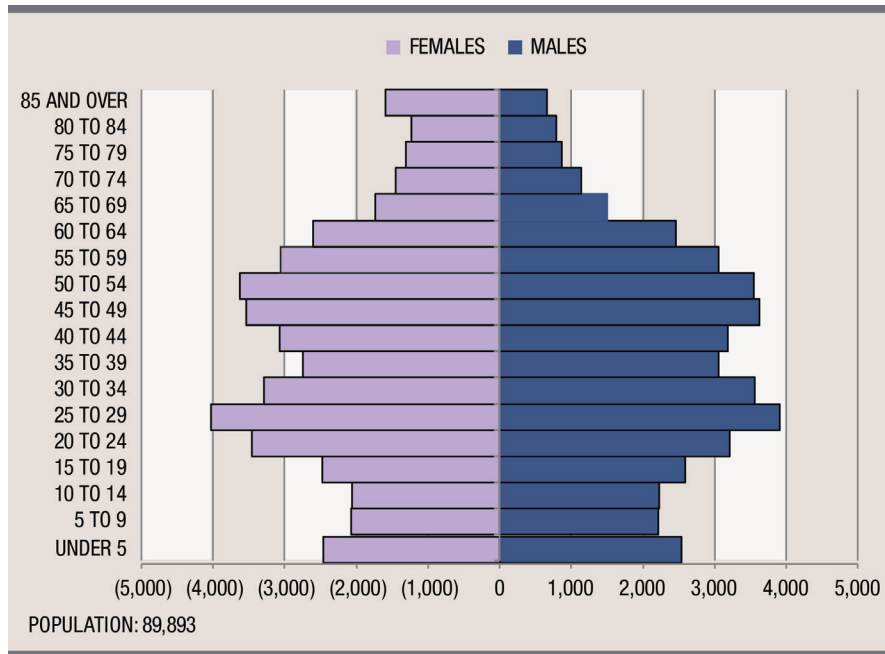
this case minority) population: a broader base and concentration among the younger age groups. A similar pattern exists on a national level.⁹ This relative youth of the minority population will be a source of future growth for Manchester.

Differences Persist Between Foreign and Native-Born Populations

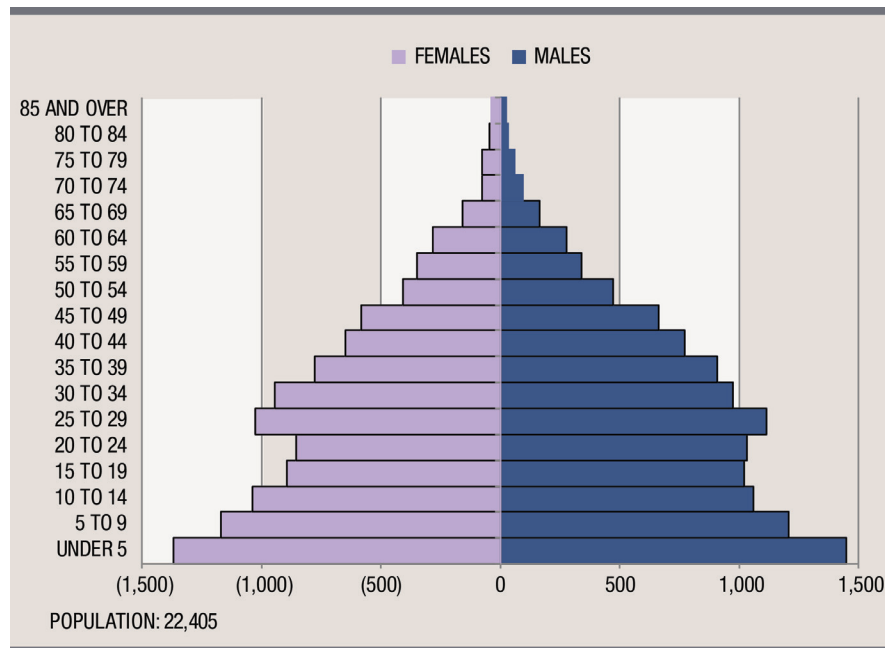
Significant disparities between the foreign- and native-born populations create challenges for their social and economic integration. In Manchester and across the country, these include education, poverty, and language differences. If the city is to embrace fully the potential benefits of immigration for future economic well-being, it must attend to these integration challenges.

Educational differences between these two populations are pronounced (Figure 8), particularly at the lowest and highest levels of educational attainment. The proportion of the foreign born with less than a high school education (27 percent) is more than twice that of the native-born population (12 percent). Indeed, among Manchester's foreign-born population, less than a high-school education is the second most common level of education attainment, with a high school diploma or GED (30 percent) the most common.

Although the majority of immigrants older than age 25 have at least a high school diploma, the considerable educational disadvantage among the foreign born creates more struggles for their financial well-being and economic mobility. Lower levels of education are highly

FIGURE 6. AGE STRUCTURE OF MANCHESTER'S NON-HISPANIC WHITE POPULATION

Source: U.S. Census, 2010

FIGURE 7. AGE STRUCTURE OF MANCHESTER'S MINORITY POPULATION

Source: U.S. Census, 2010

correlated with poverty, unemployment, and underemployment; therefore, closing the education gap remains imperative for the well-being of all of Manchester's population, not only the foreign born. Increases in educational attainment would help to ensure increased economic vitality and a broader tax base, leading to improved infrastructure and amenities, such as schools, in all neighborhoods.

In direct contrast, a large percentage of immigrants in Manchester, New Hampshire, and the United States have advanced degrees. In Manchester, 10 percent of the foreign-born population has a graduate or professional degree, compared with 8 percent of the native-born population. With recent growth in jobs in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, the educational advantage among the foreign-born population with advanced degrees may put them at an advantage to compete for jobs in these fields.

Poverty is also more prevalent among the foreign born, although the gap is smaller than the gap in education; 17 percent of the foreign born live below the poverty line in Manchester, compared with 13 percent of the native born (Figure 9). This poverty gap has narrowed since 2000 because of increasing poverty among the native born, partly attributable to the Great Recession and, perhaps, because of higher-income families moving to Manchester's suburbs.

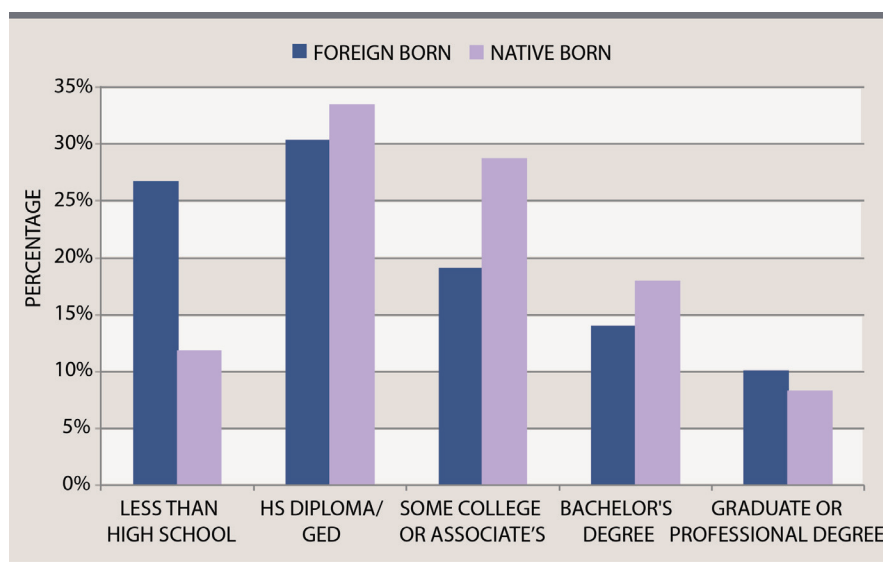
A third difference is the language diversity among immigrants. Manchester has always been linguistically diverse. Given the history of French Canadian immigration to the city, both French and

English were commonly spoken throughout Manchester until well past the mid-twentieth century. In some neighborhoods—particularly on the city’s West Side—the French language predominated, and in the past, English could be heard only sparingly in certain parts of the city. Today the city is even more linguistically diverse. In Hillsborough County, home to Manchester, a wide gap in English fluency separates foreign- and native-born residents (Figure 10). Among foreign-born non-Hispanic whites, only approximately 40 percent speak English “less than very well,” compared with nearly 70 percent of foreign-born Hispanics, almost 60 percent of foreign-born blacks, and one-half of foreign-born Asians. Historically, these disparities tend to narrow with each passing generation.¹⁰ This trend is reflected in Figure 10; regardless of racial or ethnic group, the language barrier is significantly lower for those who are native born, including children of immigrants. Nonetheless, additional policies enhancing language skills will likely ensure smoother transitions for immigrant families.

Implications for Manchester’s Economic and Social Futures

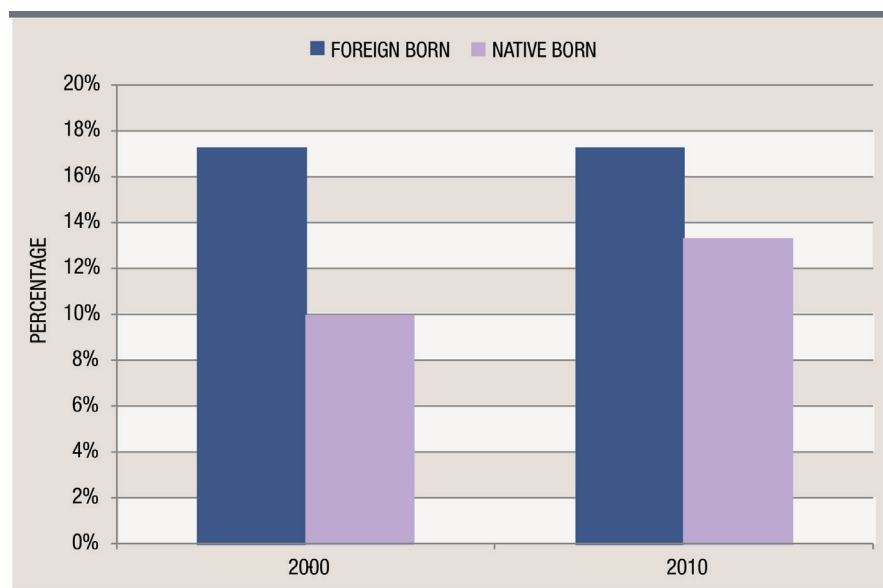
Manchester’s immigrant population creates concrete opportunities for growth and vitality through its impact on the age structure of the city and the future workforce this implies, through its contribution to cultural diversity, and through its additions to an otherwise declining population base.

FIGURE 8. EDUCATION LEVEL BY FOREIGN-BORN STATUS FOR ADULTS 25 AND OLDER (CITY OF MANCHESTER), 2007–2011



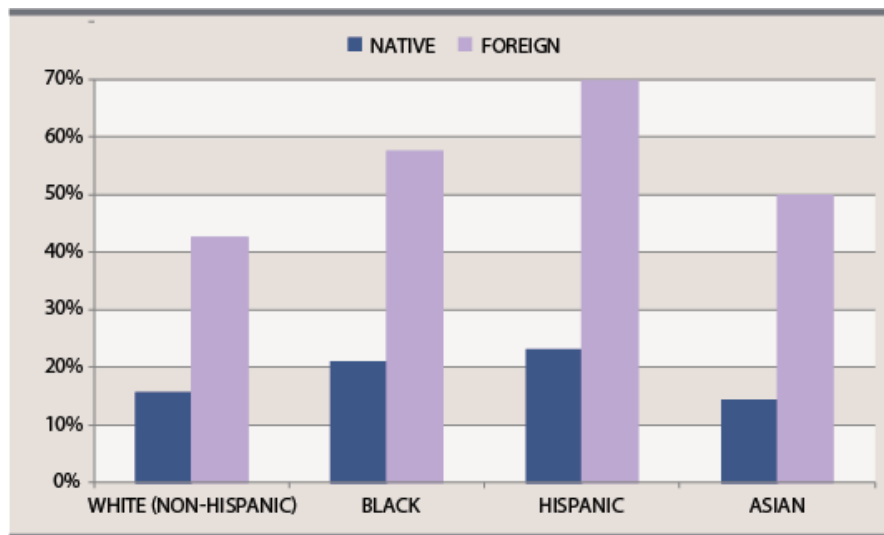
Source: American Community Survey (2011), 5-Year Estimates

FIGURE 9. PERCENTAGE OF FOREIGN- AND NATIVE-BORN BELOW POVERTY, MANCHESTER NH, 2007–2011



Source: American Community Survey (2011) 5-Year Estimates and 2000 Decennial Census

FIGURE 10. NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS (AT HOME) WHO SPEAK ENGLISH LESS THAN “VERY WELL” BY RACE/ETHNICITY AND FOREIGN-BORN STATUS, 2007–2011 (HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY)



Source: American Community Survey (2011), 5-Year Estimates

The social and economic differences between the immigrant and native populations create challenges, at least in the short-term, and the city must deal with these challenges in order to fully realize the potential opportunities. Investment in infrastructure, especially the city's schools, is critical for educating and integrating the immigrant population, and such investment would benefit all of Manchester's youth, and, by implication, the city as a whole. Support for the immigrant population, including its refugee component, is equally critical, and the important work of nonprofit organizations such as Catholic Charities, the International Institute of New England, New American Africans, and the Bhutanese Association is exemplary of efforts to include immigrants in the life of the city. Evidence on immigrant integration elsewhere in the United

States points to the importance of opportunities for increased contact between the foreign and native born.¹¹

There is also good evidence in the research literature that the response of local leaders, citizens, and stakeholders to the challenges we have described can make a real difference in the ultimate impact of immigration to the city.¹² Responses that emphasize the problems faced by immigrants can lead to divisiveness, while efforts that concentrate on inclusiveness and integration can promote the contributions immigrants make to the social and economic fabric of a community.

Manchester has always been the home of immigrants because it has been the center of business and industry in the state. The opportunities for continuing in this role depend on its success in welcoming, supporting, and educating the newcomers.

Endnotes

1. Daniel T. Lichter and Kenneth M. Johnson, "Immigrant Gateways and Hispanic Migration to New Destinations," *International Migration Review*, vol. 43, no. 3 (2009): 496–518; Daniel T. Lichter, "Integration or Fragmentation? Racial Diversity and the American Future," *Demography*, vol. 50 (2013): 359–391.
2. We refer to the Manchester metropolitan area because the focus of the brief is Manchester. Technically, the metropolitan area is the Manchester-Nashua metropolitan area.
3. In 2000, the population of Manchester was 107,006; in 2010, it was 109,565, an increase of 2,559. During this same time period, the foreign-born population increased from 10,035 to 12,929, an increase of 2,894. If not for this increase, the population in Manchester would have decreased by 335, or -0.3 percent.
4. See Tamara K. Hareven and Randolph Langenbach, *Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory-City in New England* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).
5. Refugees have settled in eighty-four towns throughout the state. Manchester, Concord, Laconia, and Nashua have had the largest number of refugees since the official program began in 1980.
6. Figures are based on the American Community Survey 2008–2012 estimates. The minority figures refer to the population that is Hispanic and/or non-white.
7. According to the American Community Survey five-year estimates, 2007–2011, the state of New Hampshire has a median age of 40.7, and Manchester City has a median age of 36.1.
8. Credit for these age pyramids goes to Luke Rogers, research assistant at the Carsey Institute.

9. Kenneth M. Johnson and Daniel T. Lichter, "The Growing Diversity of America's Children and Youth: Spatial and Temporal Dimensions," *Population and Development Review*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2010): 151–176.

10. For an in-depth discussion of socioeconomic assimilation and the narrowing gap between the native and foreign born, see Richard Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

11. Michael Jones-Correa, "All Immigration Is Local: Receiving Communities and Their Role in Integration" (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2011).

12. Patrick J. Carr, Daniel T. Lichter, and Maria J. Kefalas, "Can Immigration Save Small-Town America? Hispanic Boomtowns and the Uneasy Path to Renewal," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 641 (2012): 38–57.

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